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Mrs. CHAPONE's
LETTER
TO A
NEW-MARRIED LADY.

[Price SIX-PENCE.]

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LETTER

Mr. CHATONE

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NEW-MARRIED LADY.

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NEW-MARRIED LADY.

By Mrs. CHAPONE,

AUTHOR OF THE

LETTERS ON THE IMPROVEMENT
OF THE MIND, &c.

L O N D O N :

Printed for E. and C. DILLY, in the Poultry;
And J. WALTER, Charing-Cross.

M.DCC.LXXVII.

22

A
LETTER

TO A

NEW-MARRIED LADY.

By Mrs. CHAPONE.



LONDON:

Printed for H. and C. Dilly, in the Strand,
And J. WATTS, Cornhill.

M.DCC.LXXXVI.

(5)

A L E T T E R

T O

A NEW-MARRIED LADY.

INDEED, my dear young friend, you have highly obliged me by such a distinguishing mark of friendship and consideration as that of finding time, on the most important day of your life, to inform me, with your own hand, of your marriage: an event most interesting to me, who wish your happiness with the sincerest ardour. You tell me you expect from me, not a letter of formal congratulation, but of serious and friendly advice on the new situations and duties in which you are going to be engaged. You wish I could be always with you to

A 3

watch

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watch and direct your conduct, and seem full of that salutary fear and distrust of your own prudence, which is the best security for youth and inexperience. Whilst you retain this, I may venture to answer for you, that you will not materially deviate from the paths of duty and happiness.

I am glad you are still to remain a few weeks under the paternal roof, which has hitherto sheltered you from every evil, and where you have seen examples only of good; but, from this scene of regularity and quiet cheerfulness, you will soon go to London, to become mistress of yourself and of a family, and to plunge at once into the hurry and bustle of a world to which you are almost a stranger. Thither will my anxious good wishes attend you; for, on the manner of your first setting out depends

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pends more than you can possibly imagine.

I know you have not been brought up in modish principles, and that you do not at present consider marriage as a title to unbounded liberty and perpetual dissipation, instead of a solemn engagement to subjection and obedience, to family cares and serious employments. You will probably indeed meet with people who will endeavour to laugh you out of all such regards, and who will find something very ludicrous in the idea of authority in a husband. But, whatever your opinions may be on this head, it is certain that a man of Mr. B.'s generosity would be much mortified and distressed to find himself obliged to exert his authority in restraining your pleasures, particularly on his first setting out with you on the journey of life. He knows he

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should be universally condemned, as either jealous or covetous, should he interfere to stem the torrent of dissipation, into which it will be the business of most of your acquaintance to see you fairly plunged; for well they know that when once you are drawn into the whirlpool, more than female strength is required to get out of it again. Curiosity and vanity will join their temptations. You have a new face and new finery to shew, new flattery to hear, and every fine place about town to see and to be seen in.

Alas! poor Mr. B.!—What chance have you for a moment's attention! and what a sudden end is here of all that dear domestic happiness to which you both look'd forward with rapture a few weeks ago!—You have nothing for it but to engage as deeply in the same course, and leave to whining swains in the country all ideas of that
union

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union of heart, that sweet intercourse of tenderness and friendship of which "soft souls in love" are apt to dream, when they think of living with the object of their wishes.

Mr. B. chose you from affection only: the superiority of his fortune, and the large field of choice which that fortune, joined with his amiable person and character, secured to him, precludes the possibility of any other motive. I—who know the disinterestedness of your nature, and the perfect freedom of rejection which your parents have always allowed you—have not the least doubt that your preference of him was the genuine effect of a real attachment, without any bias from his riches. Youth is naturally disinterested, and your heart is hitherto uncorrupted. But, my dear, the mode of living, in this too civilized part of the world, leaves
scarce

scarce a single trace of nature, and even youth now grows a stranger to tenderness and truth, and pursues wealth (as the means of gratifying vanity) with all the rapacity of an old usurer. It is necessary therefore that you should prove to your husband the sincerity of your attachment, which he may justly doubt if he sees that your happiness arises from the enjoyment of his fortune rather than of him. By a reserved and moderate use of his indulgence, by always preferring his company, and that of his particular friends, to public diversions and assemblies, by studying his taste rather than your own, and making the gratification of it your highest pleasure, you must convince him that your heart is his own; a truth which should always appear in the general tenor of your conduct, rather than in professions, or

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in that officious parade of affection which designing women often substitute in the place of every genuine mark of tenderness and consideration. Dean Swift *, in his coarse way, says very sensible things on the subject of displaying affection, which however may safely be left to your own natural delicacy: "*l'amour, de sa nature, aime le secret*;" and a person of sensibility is always averse to shewing any passion or affection before those whose sympathy is not interested in it. An amiable author † of much more delicacy than the Dean, goes so far as to advise his daughters never to shew the extent of their love, even to their husbands; a precept which does no honour to his own sex, and which would take from ours its sweetest

* *Vide* Letter to a new-married Lady.

† Dr. Gregory. — *Vide* Father's Legacy.

charms,

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charms, simplicity and artless tenderness. A haughty and imperious woman, who desired an undue power over her husband, would indeed do wisely to keep him always in suspense, and conceal from him an affection which must increase his power and diminish her own; but a gentle and truly feminine nature has no such desires, and consequently needs no such arts. A modest heart may trust its genuine feelings with a husband who has generosity and delicacy, and who, like yours, is untainted with that base opinion of women which a commerce with the worst of the sex always inspires.

Swift, (and almost every male writer on the subject) pronounces that the passion of love in men is infallibly destroyed by possession, and can subsist but a short time after marriage. What a dreadful sentence must

this

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this appear to you at this time! your heart, which feels its own affection increased, knows not how to support the idea of such a change in the beloved object: but, my dear friend, the God of Nature, who provided the passion of love as the incitement to marriage, has also provided resources for the happiness of this his own-institution, which kind and uncorrupted natures will not fail to find. It is not indeed intended that we should pass our lives in the delirium of passion: but whilst this subsides, the habit of affection grows strong. The tumult and anxiety of desire must of course be at an end when the object is secure; but a milder and more serene happiness succeeds, which in good hearts creates a tenderness that is often wanting amidst the fervors of violent passion. Before this palls, your business is to build the
solid

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solid foundation of a durable friendship. This will best be done whilst the partiality of fondness places all your excellencies in the fairest point of view, and draws a veil over your defects. This season you should take care to prolong, as far as is possible, that habit and esteem may have time to take deep root: to this end you must avoid every thing that can create a moment's disgust towards either your person or your mind. Keep the infirmities of both out of the observation of your husband more scrupulously than of any other man; and never let your idea in his imagination be accompanied with circumstances unpleasant or disgraceful. A mistress of a family cannot always be adorned with smiles. It will sometimes be incumbent on you to find faults, and human nature may sometimes fail of doing this with proper temper and dignity;

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dignity; therefore let it never be done in the presence of your husband. Do not disturb him with the detail of your grievances from servants or trades-people, nor with your methods of family-management. But above all, let nothing of this kind embitter his meals when you happen to be tête-à-tête at table. In mixing with the world and its affairs, he will often meet with such things as cannot fail to hurt a mind like his, and which may sometimes affect his temper. But when he returns to his own house, let him there find every thing serene and peaceful, and let your chearful complacency restore his good-humour, and quiet every uneasy passion.

Endeavour to enter into his pursuits, catch his taste, improve by his knowledge; nor let any thing that is interesting to him appear a matter

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of indifference to you. Thus will you make yourself delightful to him as a companion and friend, in whom he may be always sure to find that sympathy which is the grand cement of friendship. But if you affect to speak of his pursuits as beyond your capacity or foreign to your taste, you can be no longer pleasing to him in that light, and must rely merely on your personal attractions, of which, alas, time and familiarity must every day impair the value. When you are in the country, perhaps you may sometimes find hours, and even days for each other's society, without any other company: in this case, conversation will hardly supply sufficient entertainment; and, next to displeasing or disgusting him, you should of all things dread his growing dull and weary in your company. If you can prevail upon him to read with you,

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to practise music with you, or to teach you a language or a science, you will then find amusement for every hour; and nothing is more endearing than such communications. The improvements and accomplishments you gain from him will be doubly valuable in his esteem; and certainly you can never acquire them so agreeably as from his lips. And though you should not naturally be disposed to the same taste in reading or amusement, this may be acquired by habit, and by a hearty desire of conforming to his inclinations and sharing in his pleasures. With such a master you will find your understanding enlarge, and your taste refine to a degree far beyond your expectations; and the sweet reward of his praises will inspire you with such spirit and diligence as will easily surmount any natural inaptitude.

B

Your

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Your behaviour to his particular friends and near relations will have the most important effects on your mutual happiness. If you do not adopt his sentiments with regard to these, your union must be very incomplete, and a thousand disagreeable circumstances will continually arise from it. I am told that he is an excellent son to a mother, who, with many good qualities, has defects of temper which determined him to decline her continuing to live with him after his marriage. In this he is equally kind and prudent; for though he could himself meritoriously bear with failings to which he had been accustomed from his infancy, in a parent who doats upon him, yet this would have been too hard a task upon you, who have not an equal affection to support your duty, and to whom her ways would have been new and

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and unusual. But though I thus far highly approve his consideration for you, yet you must remember how great a part of her happiness she is thus deprived of on your account, and make her all the amends in your power by your own attentions, as well as by promoting opportunities of indulging her in the company of her son. It would be a grievous charge on your conscience, if thro' your means he should become less observant of her, or diminish aught of that duty and affection which has hitherto so amiably distinguished him. Be careful therefore that no dispute may ever happen between this lady and yourself, no complaint from either of you disturb his peace, to whom it would be so painful and unnatural to take part against either. Be armed against the sallies of her temper, and predetermined never to

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quarrel with her, whatever she may say or do. In such a relationship, this conduct would not be meanness but merit; nor would it imply any unworthy compliance or false assent; since silence and good-humoured steadiness may always preserve sincerity in your conversation, and proper freedom in your conduct. If she should desire to controul your actions, or to intermeddle in the affairs of your family, more than you think is reasonable, hear her advice with patience, and answer with respect, but in a manner that may let her see you mean to judge of your own duties for yourself. “I will consider of
“what you are so good to observe to
“me.—I will endeavour to rectify
“whatever is amiss”—or some such general answer, will probably for the time put a stop to her attempts of this kind.

Great

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Great care must be taken to proportion at least your outward regards with equity and good-breeding between your husband's relations and your own. It would be happy if your feelings could be almost the same to both: but whether they are so or not, you are bound by duty and prudence to cultivate as much as possible the good-will and friendship of the family into which you are now adopted, without prejudice to that affection and gratitude in which I am sure you can never be wanting towards your own.

If it is an important duty to avoid all dissensions and disobligations with those who are nearly connected with your husband, of how much greater consequence is it to avoid all occasions of resentment between yourselves? Whatever may be said of the quarrels of *lovers*, believe me those of

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married people have always dreadful consequences, especially if they are not very short and very slight. If they are suffered to produce bitter or contemptuous expressions, or betray an habitual dislike in one party of any thing in the person or mind of the other, such wounds can scarcely ever be thoroughly healed: and tho' regard to principle and character lays the married couple under a necessity to make up the breach as well as they can, yet is their affiance in each other's affection so rudely shaken in such conflicts, that it can hardly ever be perfectly fixed again. The painful recollection of what is past, will often intrude upon the tenderest hours, and every trifle will awaken and renew it. You must *even now* be particularly on your guard against this source of misery. A new-married pair, from their very excess of fondness,

A Letter to a new-married Lady. 23

ness, sometimes give way to little jealousies and childish quarrels, which at first perhaps quickly end in the renewal and increase of tenderness, but, if often repeated, they lose these agreeable effects, and soon produce others of a contrary nature. The dispute grows every time more serious—jealousies and distrusts take deeper root—the temper is hurt on both sides—habits of sourness, thwarting, and mutual misconstruction prevail, and soon overpower all that tenderness which originally gave them birth. Keep it then constantly in mind, that the happiness of marriage depends entirely upon a solid and permanent friendship, to which nothing is more opposite than jealousy and distrust. Nor are they less at variance with the true interests of passion. You can never be a gainer by taxing your husband's affection beyond its natural

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strength; the fear of alarming your jealousy, and bringing on a quarrel, may force him to feign a greater fondness than he feels; but this very effort and constraint will in fact diminish, and by degrees extinguish that fondness. If therefore he should appear less tender or attentive than you wish, you must either awaken his passion by displaying some new grace—some winning charm of sweetness and sensibility, or else conform (at least in appearance) to that rate of tenderness which his example prescribes; for it is your part rather modestly to follow as he leads, than make him feel the uneasiness of not being able to keep pace with you. At least one may pronounce that there is nothing less likely to increase affection than ill-humour and captiousness. The truth is, that pride rather

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rather than tenderness usually occasions the unreasonable expectations of an exception person, and it is rewarded, as it deserves, with mortifications, and the cold dislike of those who suffer from it.

I am unwilling to sadden your present halcyon days and the fair prospect of happiness before you, by supposing the possibility of any proper cause of jealousy—any real unkindness or infidelity on the part of Mr. B. As far as the human character can be known and relied on, you have reason to think yourself secure from this heaviest of calamities; and nothing but irresistible proof, unsought for, and obtruded upon your senses, should ever shake your confidence and esteem. If this were to happen—if my dear tender friend should be doom'd to the heart-breaking trial
of

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of seeing those looks of love changed into

“ —hard Unkindness’ alter’d eye

“ That mocks the tear it forced to flow :” —

GRAY.

What must then be your resource?

——Not rage and exclamation——
not sullenness and pride——not an
appeal to the world, which would
laugh at your complaints——nor even
to your friends, who cannot help
you, unless by a separation, which
would publish and compleat your
misfortune! — The comforts and
helps of religion, with a firm reso-
lution not to be driven out of the
path of duty, can alone support you
under such a sorrow. The only hope
of removing the cause of it must be
derived from time and future contin-
gencies, which you will watch for
and improve. Sickness or disap-
pointment may give him opportu-
nity

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nity for reflection, and for observing the merit of that silent patience, the dignity of that uniform adherence to your duty which must force his esteem, and may at length regain his heart. If not, yours will of course be cured of the exquisite pain of unrequited love, which cannot very long subsist in a mind of any dignity or strength. If you have children, they will supply the "aching void" with a passion not less lively than that which you will have subdued; for their sakes life will still be valuable to you, and entertained with cheerfulness. But let me hasten from a subject so unsuitable to your present situation and to your most reasonable hopes.

I cannot but flatter myself that ladies are mightily improved since the time when Dean Swift (writing on the same occasion that I do now) exhorts

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exhorts his fair pupil to make no friendships with any of her own sex. This is, in effect, forbidding her to make any friendships at all; for, the world, with very good reason, tolerates no male friends at your age, excepting your nearest relations. The rules of decorum in such points are founded on a knowledge of human nature, which young women cannot have attained, and are therefore apt to despise such rules, as founded on base ideas of the nature of friendship, or of the hearts that entertain it. But one would have supposed that the Dean had lived long enough in the world, and thought ill enough of mankind to have been convinced of the impropriety of a young lady's making her strictest intimacies and confidential attachments with persons of the other sex. But, setting aside the danger to her reputation and even

to

to her morals, surely a woman who despised her own sex, and would converse with none but men, would be not less ridiculous than a man who should pass his whole time among women. Like the monkey in the fable, she would stand a chance of being rejected and disowned by both species. The reasons the Dean gives for this preposterous advice, if ever founded in truth, are certainly so no longer. You may find advantages in the conversation of many ladies, if not equal to those which men are qualified to *give*, yet equal at least to what you, *as a female*, are capable of *receiving*. Yet in one point the Dean and I agree; in recommending your husband to be your first and dearest friend, and his judgment to be consulted in the choice of every new one you may hereafter make. Those you already possess are, I believe, secure

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of some portion of his esteem, and he is too much interested in your constancy and fidelity of heart, to wish you to be fickle towards them. I shall therefore depend on his full consent to my having always the pleasure of styling myself

Your faithful

and affectionate friend,

H. CHAPONE.

F I N I S.

ly.

and
your
to
hem.
s full
plea-

nd,

ONE.